

Cross-Cutting Training Forum (CCTF)

Frequently Asked Questions & Answers

As a new user, we expect that you may have an unanswered question or two. Here are some frequently asked questions and our answers:

1. ***How did the Forum come into being? Who developed it?***

In the Spring of 1999, Albuquerque Operations Office organized a team to investigate ways to improve the cost-effectiveness of training in the Department of Energy. While it may eventually be useful and important to do a comprehensive review of training courses within DOE with the intent of reducing existing redundancy, the team believed that a much more manageable and higher priority task should be to eliminate future redundancy. Funds for web-based programming support came from MA-31. Starting with the concept of a basic email list server, the team added valuable enhancements to end up with an easy to use combination email/web-based discussion forum. The team members then put the new tool to the test for several weeks which resulted in further fine-tuning of the system.

2. ***What is the main idea behind the forum?***

The concept behind the Forum is this: If, before new training development takes place, a site with the need for a new generic (partially or wholly cross-cutting) course will notify the entire DOE training community of that need. That site will frequently find its needs met by existing courses, precluding expensive new development. In cases where no matching course exists, a need notification may spawn a collaborative development effort where costs are shared and content is kept suitable for multi-site use.

The forum is a formal but friendly online place for authorized users to make such notifications--called initial requests and then respond to other's requests by indicating an identical need, possible match, etc.

It is expected that there will be, eventually, at least one individual representing each site. Sites can organize themselves however they wish, with several or just one official representative. Each site can divide up the content areas or control which participants can only read initial requests and responses and which can reply to the forum. Regardless of how the site decides to configure its participants, the goal is for each initial request (need notification) to be responded to appropriately within 5 working days by at least one person at each site.

3. *What does the term cross-cutting training mean?*

Over the years, the DOE training community has used the term cross-cutting to mean courses or parts of courses that have wide applicability across the Department. There has been no hard and fast definition--in fact at one time a continuum relating to cross-cutting was discussed. At one end of the continuum are courses that are clearly generic and useful across all Federal and Contractor organizations. Courses at this end tend to be regulatory-driven courses or mandatory training set up in conformance with government-wide laws and regulations. Training managers throughout the Federal Government and Government Contractors as a whole are seeking to find ways to build and share these generic courses. Some examples are ethics, sexual harassment, computer security, diversity, and various health and safety courses. At the other end of the continuum are courses that are entirely site-specific. These are NOT cross-cutting. Between the wholly-generic and the wholly-site-specific are a wide range of somewhat generic courses that may be generic to specific functions or jobs that individuals may perform. For example, all computer network managers will need to understand the generic principles of networks. Not everyone in the Department of Energy needs to have this understanding, however, and some additional training related to specific site configurations will be need to be added.

If the fundamentals for a given job can be taught and learned in a fairly generic way, then that content can be treated as cross-cutting. It is sometimes possible to separate that generic content out so that it can be used widely. At some point, each site needs to add training for whatever site-specific facts, concepts, rules, and principles that are unique and appropriate to that site. The assumption that it makes sense economically and in terms of learning effectiveness to package training in this way undergirds the entire Forum and cost-savings efforts.

4. *How does the CCTF work?*

An initial list of users was compiled of training managers within the DOE Complex. Each user was given an identification and password, and encouraged to log onto a secure web site (<http://cted.inel.gov/cted/cctf>).

When a user (or the site he/she represents) has a need for a new cross-cutting training course, that user uses the features of the forum to create a new initial request. Shortly after that request is submitted (through the web page), an email is sent to the appropriate users (each user may select areas for which he/she wishes to receive emails).

A short time later, an email appears in these users email inboxes, giving them the header of the request and a link to the appropriate web page where they can view and respond to the detailed information. (Some users will not be able to automatically link to the web site. Check with your web administrators. They may be able to help you get this working. Otherwise, you can manually cut-and paste the address to your web browser).

At this point in time, someone from each site should be browsing through their local information and within 5 days reply to that request. If a site has a course that appears to match the need very closely, the reply type of "Possible Course" is most appropriate. Or if the site has a similar need, it can select "Ditto to Request". If the site doesn't have a probable match and doesn't have a similar need, it should still send an "Acknowledged/NTA (Nothing to Add)" reply so that the requestor can tell who has responded. Comments can be added to all types of replies.

After a few days, the requestor can then start following up on the "Possible Course" replies and "Ditto" replies. The built-in phone-book should help enable easy direct emailing, phoning or faxing to get more information. As soon as some conclusions are possible, the requestor should then create a "Summarization" reply that documents what has been learned and the dollars saved through reuse or cost sharing.

5. *How do I get the help if I need it?*

With an understanding of the intent driving the design and operation of the CCTF, you may find that the screens and functions flow naturally and no training or further reference is needed. However, should you find something less than obvious, we recommend the following sources of help:

- User's Guide for details regarding each screen, option, and entry.
- Email or phone one of the Points of Contact or Webmaster.
- Add a reply (question) to the Meta-Discussion Thread.

6. *What is a request thread?*

CCTF is organized to make it easy to see what responses have been received for an initial request. This grouping of an initial request and its responses are a request thread. The responses in a thread can be viewed in several different orders including type, title, date, and sender. A typical complete thread starts with the initial request, and may have several "Ditto request" and "Possible Course" replies, a few "Other" type replies that are for clarification, and at least one "Summarization." (It is very appropriate that those "ditto"ing a need also add a summarization.)

7. *What is a Meta-Discussion and why is there one in the Forum?*

The team creating the CCTF has worked hard to make it as easy to use and sensible as possible. However, as the Forum is implemented across the entire Department, there will be some things that the participants will discover about how to improve it. The Meta-Discussion is the only non-request thread. The purpose of this thread is to communicate opinions on how to improve the overall functioning of the Forum. It is a good place to make comments, suggestions, or ask questions about the Forum in general.

8. ***How seriously is DOE taking this system? How is participation be encouraged?***

The level of interest and support throughout DOE is keen, especially with the conclusions of recent GAO reports that better sharing is needed. All sites are encouraged to participate.

Participation is being tracked by the system and you as a user can call up the “Site Statistics Page” from the main menu. This page shows the number of initial requests from each site, the % of initial requests replied to, and the total dollars saved per site.

Another feature built into the program is the ability for each request thread to “Show non-responding sites.”

9. ***How can I get to the training request/responses that are new to me?***

If you have set up your account information within the phone book so that you receive emails for all new requests and replies, you can rely on the link in your email messages to point you to all new request or response entries. You can automatically link to CCTF (if your email system supports this feature) for each item.

Another way to find those items that are quite recent is to select the “View a list of All Request Threads and Responses” option. Sort by date by mouse-clicking on the Title “Date”. If the Date is highlighted in red then it is already sorted by date.

10. ***The program won’t allow me to go beyond the logon screen.***

This could be a problem with an out-of-date browser that you are currently using. This program was developed for current-technology browsers (Internet Explorer or Netscape Communicator) . If you have an older version of a browser, contact your system administrator to upgrade your browser. Also, check to ensure the “cookies” feature is turned on. Contact your system administrator if your not certain.

OR

You may be entering and incorrect User ID or Password.

Contact the Webmaster if your problem is related to the items above.

11. ***I forgot my password or I receive the message “Log on Rejected”.***

Contact the Webmaster.

12. ***How can I disable email that I receive on training requests that does not pertain to my site?***

Select the *View Phone Book* from the main menu ➡ find your name from the phonebook by the *key word search* or *alpha listing* ➡ select *Details* ➡ select *Edit Account Information* ➡ At the bottom of the screen, mouse-click on *Select training categories you wish to receive by email* ➡ mouse-click on the category items that you don't wish to receive that are currently in the *Categories you will Receive* box. Requests and replies related to these categories will be filtered out so you will not receive emails related to them. If you wish to see these later, you may go into the Forum through your browser and look at threads related to all categories.

13. ***Who should add the savings summarization in the "Dollars Saved" box on the Reply Form?***

Organizations that have put in an initial request and then find one or more courses through the CCTF that they plan to use (with/without modification) that they would have otherwise had to develop, should estimate how much using that course or courses will save them (or help them avoid spending on new development). These organizations should then create a summary response that should indicate where they found the existing course(s) and how much savings (or cost avoidance) they expect to net.

Other organizations who have indicated a "Ditto to the request" that also found that same or other reusable courses should also create a summary response and enter the dollars they expect to save (avoid spending).

14. ***What if there are no existing courses but the forum leads to collaboration that saves each of the parties some development cost?***

In this case, each collaborator could enter reply to the initial request showing the summary of how much the collaboration on this new course development should eventually save them.

15. ***What should be shown in the savings field?***

The net savings after the costs of obtaining the course and any local customization of an already existing course, or the net savings of having collaborated in development of a new course.